173 While these events occurred in the east, a sister of the Moro Naba, assigned to guard the tibo fetishes, quarreled with her brother and fled west to Ouahigouya. This region thus became Mossi territory and took the name of land of Ya. (2)

2. For further details, see Lt. Marc. op. cit. Ch. 7, and especially Delafosse, Haut Sénégal et Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Series I, Vol. 2, p. 305 ff.

131 The region thus conquered lies within the bend of the Niger, approximately between the 11°30 and 13°30 parallels and from 2° to 5° longitude west of Paris. Its closest neighbors are the Macina and the Habé to the north, the Samo to the northwest, the Gourounsi to the west and southwest, the Nancana /Nankana/ to the south, the Bousansé to the southeast, the Gourmantché to the east, and the Peul of Dori to the northeast. The Mossi population has been estimated at 161 one and a half million, to which must be added the Yarsé, who are Mandé completely assimilated to the Mossi, the pastoral Peul, the Haoussa /Hausa/ who form small colonies near the large commercial centers of the region, and a few lesser groups. We shall deal with these populations only insofar as they have contact with the Mossi, in whose territory they are scattered.

Two important rivers cross the country from northwest [Tr., the 133 original reads northeast] to southeast. They are the two Volta rivers, the White and the Red. In addition to these two larger waterways, which nevertheless do not flow throughout the year, there are a large number of watercourses /Tr., the French term, marigot, covers both river branch channels and shallow depressions where water accumulates forming pools/. They become impassable torrents after a storm, /6/ but remain empty during the dry season from November to June. The 312 shallow wells which supply water for the households are usually dug by the women in the beds of these watercourses.

There are no high mountains in Mossi country. When arriving from the north, the traveller crosses the beautiful cliffs of Bandiagara and the mountainous country of the Habe. /Two photographs appear here./ Mossi country begins almost at the foot of the cliffs. The northwestern region is, however, quite broken and includes the Pilimpikou peak; the two Volta rivers, especially the White Volta,

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

PETER B. HAMMOND

13. *Economic Change and Mossi Acculturation*

Some five thousand Mossi from the kingdom of Yatenga in the Upper Volta have been resettled on the newly developed lands of the Niger Irrigation Project in the French Sudan. Removed from a cultural setting which has been relatively undisturbed by the influence of European civilization, they are required to adapt themselves rapidly to an economic situation structured and directed by Europeans. Economic organization being the variable involved, a study of their adjustment provides an opportunity to examine some of the cultural problems and processes related to economic development in underdeveloped areas.

Yatenga is the northernmost of four Mossi kingdoms located in the Upper Volta. It is a sub-Saharan savanna land of red earth, low rainfall, gently rolling plains, and low hills. Ouahigouya, the capital, gives its name to the French administrative unit, the Cercle de Ouahigouya, which has governed the kingdom from its headquarters in this ancient city since its conquest in 1895.[1]

To distinguish themselves from the people of the neighboring kingdoms of Ouagadougou, Fada-N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo, the Mossi of the Yatenga sometimes speak of themselves as "Yadise" (those of Yadiga). This name refers to the fact that they regard themselves as being descended, as a nation, from Naba Yadiga, the half-mythical warrior-prince from Ouagadougou who broke away from his father's dynasty to form the separate political entity, Yatenga, which bears his name (*ya* for "Yadiga" and *tenga* for "country"). The Mossi have not always been numerically and culturally dominant in the Yatenga, as they are today. They recognize that their ancestors came from the south, from Mamprusi and Dagomba in the northern territories of Ghana.

Highly organized politico-religious states representing the cultural amalgamation of native and foreign populations and institutions are characteristic of the Voltaic region of West Africa. Acknowledging that we "owe to Rattray the discovery that these central Voltaic tribes are

[1] Capitaine Noire, *Monographie du Cercle de Ouahigouya* (Ouahigouya, 1904), p. 15.

6: Tauxier--1 G-4,5 (ca. 1908) 1912 FA28 Mossi FA28

/451/ Book Four

Black Warriors and Conquerors

Chapter I

The Mossi -- Occupations

101 131 The Mossi are settled between the twelfth and fourteenth degrees of north latitude, and between the second and fifth degrees of west longitude. To the south, they extend slightly beyond the twelfth degree of latitude. They are indeed to be found in Saraboutenga, Rakaye, Béré, and Tenkodogo, but this does not bring them too far south of the twelfth degree. To the north, on the other hand, they do not quite reach the fourteenth degree.

161 563 The Mossi form a rather large group which occupies, in the center of the area, the circle /an administrative division/ of Ouagadougou; to the northwest, the circle of Ouahigouya; to the southeast, the residency /administrative center/ of Tenkodogo; and to the east of the latter, the circle of Fada N'Gourma. Of course, the Mossi do not make up the total population of these four districts. In the Ouahigouya circle, there are the Habé /Habe/ and Houmbébé /Humbe/ to the northwest, and the Samoro /Samo/ to the south. In the Ouagadougou circle, which may be regarded as the center of Mossi territory, there are the Kipirsi to the east. In the Tenkodogo residency there are the Boussansé /Busansi/ to the south and in the circle of Fada N'Gourma the Gourmantché or Gourmanké /Gurma/ to the east. The Mossi, however, make up 161 the /452/ greater part of the total population in all four areas. In the circle of Ouagadougou, they number 750,000, in the residency of Tenkodogo, 122,000, in the residency of Leo, 1,000. This adds up to 873,000 for the circle of Ouagadougou as a whole. Assuming that there are 200,000 Mossi in the circles of Ouahigouya and Fada N'Gourma (a very approximate figure), a total of 1,073,000 Mossi is obtained. This makes them by far the most numerous group in all of French West Africa. The whole of our Dahomey, for example,

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[P. xii]

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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121 [174] functioning of early Sudanese societies. It will also attempt to demonstrate how European conquest affected the political organization of the Mossi and contributed to its ultimate decline.

The kingdom of Ouagadougou was selected as the main object of study, primarily because it emerged as the most important Mossi polity and retained this position through the greater part of Mossi history. Attention will be given to the other Mossi polities and the three other Mossi kingdoms—Yatenga, Tenkodogo, and the more remote Fada-N'Gourma, all of which resemble Ouagadougou—only insofar as they affect the history of Ouagadougou or highlight the basic nature of Mossi government.

101 161 The Mossi are a Sudanese Negroid population in the new Republic of the Upper Volta.[2] They number about 2,200,000, or approximately half of the country's total population. Their ancestral territory, which they call ● 131 *Mogho* (land of the Mossi), covers some 30,000 square miles in the southern 133 part of the Republic. It is a huge plateau, lying from 1,000 to 1,600 feet above sea level, and broken by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills. The Kipirsi range in the northeast has an average height of about 2,000 feet and includes the sacred mountain of the Mossi, known as Plimpikou. The Boussouma range to the east reaches a height of some 1,500 feet, and the Naouri range in the southeast is almost as high.

132 The climate of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic zone. There are two main seasons, one cold and dry, the other hot and wet. The first begins in November with the coming of the harmattan and ends in January, the coolest month, when the average temperature is about 70° F. and the humidity about 12 per cent. The hot season extends from March to October. In July, the warmest month, the temperature reaches a high of 88° F. and the humidity 78 per cent. Violent dust storms herald the rains, which begin late in May and end in September. The rain falls almost entirely in heavy showers and thunderstorms, and the average annual fall is between 30 and 40 inches. In those years when the rainfall is about 40 inches and is regularly spaced, the Mossi can look forward to a good harvest. When the rainfall is below 30 inches and is spaced irregularly during the planting season, the threat of famine is serious. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for agriculture that in 1956 the people of one Mossi district anxiously awaited "two rains" (two showers), without which they feared that in 1957 there would be a difficult "hungry period" (the time between the exhaustion of one year's crops and the maturing of the next).

133 Mossi country is drained by only three rivers: the Black Volta with its two chief tributaries, the Sourou and the Debere, and the Red and White Voltas with their numerous small tributaries. Only the Black Volta flows

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

appealed to the district chief, and occasionally the woman was sent back. A nobleman set on having a certain girl as a wife usually had small bracelets like those worn by all noble wives placed on her ankles. Once this was done, the chief could not be compelled to send her back to her parents, and any man who tried to retrieve her was guilty of interfering with a nobleman's wife and could be killed for it. In fact, only the male relatives of noblemen's wives could converse with them without running the risk of being apprehended and executed.

The district was the most important unit in the Mossi principalities and kingdoms. It was on this level that the Mossi nobility came into direct contact with the various social and ethnic groups of the society. Here, kinship and affinal ties linked the conquerors and the conquered, the ancient and recent nobility, the refugees from conflicts over the nam and the resident aliens, in a network of social, ritual, economic, and political relationships. It was also on this level that myths and traditions legitimized most effectively the Mossi socio-economic and political system as well as the relationships between the various social and ethnic groups.

The number and size of the Mossi districts varied greatly from one principality or kingdom to another. Some districts were large and wealthy, with a number of large villages; smaller districts had a larger proportion of small villages and hamlets. The average number of these small units was probably between fifty and sixty-five per district. The population of the districts ranged from 10,000 to 35,000 persons. Some *tense* (villages) had as many as 5,000 inhabitants and some as few as 50. The average village had about 500 inhabitants. But regardless of size, all Mossi districts and component villages had basically the same structure and fulfilled the same functions. The structure of Nobere district is representative. Nobere covered approximately 200 square miles. It was bounded on the east by a district called Manga, on the north by the districts of Toece and Djiba, and on the west and south by the Red Volta River. A census taken in 1905, just nine years after the European conquest, showed the Nobere population to be about 13,200.[10] In 1955 approximately 10,000 persons inhabited 24 villages and hamlets scattered through the more inhabitable part of the district.

The number of villages and hamlets in Nobere district apparently fluctuated. Villages were occasionally abandoned, while small hamlets grew into prominent settlements. The people of Nobere always tried to establish their villages as close to the Red Volta as possible in order to utilize the more fertile lands. But they were repeatedly driven back by disease and

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

habited by Yarse, people of Mandingo origin who had been assimilated by the Mossi. There were no Fulani in Nobere, even though some lived in nearby districts. But in Pinse village there lived people called Simili-Mossi, who claimed descent from Fulani herdsmen and Mossi women. Basbedo village was inhabited and ruled by people of Busansi origin. They claimed that their ancestors had fled from famine and other hardships in Busansi country and had been granted haven by Naba Biligo. The people who lived in the two saghse of Nab'tenga called Dapore (Dapobi) and Baglere (Bangare) were serfs of diverse non-Mossi origin. Saghse or compounds of Gurunsi slaves were found close to the dwellings of nobles and village chiefs throughout the district.

The number of saghse in the villages of Nobere district varied according to the size of the village and the pattern of nam inheritance within the major lineage segment that ruled the village. The saka itself housed a minor-lineage segment. The larger the village's minor lineage segment and the greater this group's genealogical depth, the more numerous were its component segments and thus its saghse. The proliferation of saghse and minor-lineage segments within the ruling lineage of a village was dependent primarily on possession of the nam. As soon as a man received the nam, he obtained control over a large amount of goods and services. He was then in a position to obtain many wives for himself and his immediate relatives, and as a result his minimal lineage grew rapidly. In time this group became so large that it split from its brother babissi within the saka, and formed a new saka of its own. Finally, this babissi became a minor lineage in its own saka, in segmental opposition to the other babissi and minor lineages within the other saghse. If the descendants of one man retained the nam for about three generations, their lineage segment and saka grew larger and in time cast off its own junior segments. However, if the segment lost the nam to a man of another babissi and saka, it ceased to proliferate. Some such groups even declined and disappeared by fusing with other local segments of the same lineage. Here is how the system worked in Barkago village of Nobere district.

Barkago itself was founded sometime in the dim past by a son of Naba Biligo. It had an area of eight or ten square miles and a population of about 650 when the French arrived in 1896. Its boundaries were set by such natural phenomena as clumps of trees, hills, and ravines. The village itself included five distinct saghse separated by footpaths, hills, rocks, and ravines, and an area of wasteland (*weogho*). Three of the saghse, Natenga ("chief's land"), Godin, and Kedpalago, were inhabited by the minor segments of the boodoo of Naba Biligo. Here is how this came about. After

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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[Pre - World War II Period]

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trative and technical personnel serving in its capital available for general service."[80] But another, more important reason for dismembering the colony was to make available "to the Ivory Coast, a rich and prosperous colony with diversified environments and products, an abundant and disciplined labor force, which alone was lacking to infuse it with hopeful vigor."[80] According to the articles of a decree promulgated in January 1933, the Upper Volta was divided as follows: The cercle of Ouahigouya and part of the cercle of Dedougou, encompassing 52,400 square kilometers and 712,000 people, were attached to the Sudan; the cercle of Fada-N'-Gourma and Dori, with 70,700 square kilometers and 268,000 people, was attached to the Niger; Tenkodogo, Gaoua, Batie, Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, and part of Dedougou were given to the Ivory Coast. The Ivory Coast by this change gained some 153,400 square kilometers and 2,019,000 people.

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The Mossi chiefs resented the division of the lands conquered by Ouedraogo and Oubri, and while they never ceased to desire the reintegration of Mogho, they were powerless to do or say anything about it at the time. Many young French colonial officials also resented the division of the colony, and were eloquent in their denunciation of what they considered a moribund colonial policy. A member of the Upper Volta administration, Robert Delavignette, says in his obituary of the colony:

> These obscure masses: three million persons. . . . Once they represented a threat, although the thousands of horsemen of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou were defeated by the infantry squads of Captain Voulet in 1897. Soon the threat had diminished, but the matchless aggregate of villages remained. It was an alluring challenge to administrators. Let us mention briefly how they dealt with it. The more they pacified it, the more difficult their task became. The more they tried to impose upon it an open economy with a pattern of roads, urban centers, and cotton fields; and the more they tried to discover the vital principle of that economy in order to establish a new harmony between the land and these obscure masses, the more they broke down the old, set, traditional economy. . . . The heartland of the Upper Volta was indeed molded: 6,000 kilometers of roads, 100,000 hectares of collective fields, and a few urban centers built of mudbricks—all or almost all of this done by hand. No original methods or powerful tools were used, no inventiveness or clarity of purpose was shown. This was but a megalomanic copy of old patterns of mercantile exploitation, and [represented], in the heartlands, powerless, joyless work for those obscure masses.[81]

The criticisms of such officials as Delavignette and Henri Labouret persuaded the colonial administration to dispatch to Ouagadougou a higher

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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8. Cf. Marc, p. 156. 9. Cf. Fortes, pp. 258-71. 040
10. Skinner, "The Diffusion of Islam," pp. 659-69.
11. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 585-86.
12. Dim Delobson, p. 205. 13. Crozat, p. 4820.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4822. 15. *Ibid.*, p. 4835.
16. Binger, I, 452. 17. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 452-56.
19. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897-98). Instructions left to Captain Scal by Destenave, June 1897.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Marc, p. 17.
2. Barth, III, 595. Although it is possible that the Wolof prince Bemoy did hear about the Mossi, he was mistaken about the name of their ruler. Interestingly enough, the title "Ogane" is not too dissimilar from Hogon, the title of head men among the Dogon (Habe or Kado) whom the Mossi had pushed into the hills of Bandiagara. Cf. Bascom, p. 24. [114] [174]
3. Barth, III, 606. 4. Bowdich, p. 180.
5. Dupuis, Appendix CVII. 6. Clapperton, II, 323.
7. Barth, III, 643-49. As cited earlier, Barth states that the Portuguese got reports about the Mossi in the year 1533 "from the wrong side, namely from Benin." This may not have been altogether "the wrong side," however, for Barth gives us data on caravans from Mossi country to Sansane Mango in Togoland that indicate how news about the Mossi might have traveled from the interior to Benin city in Nigeria.
8. Koelle, p. 6. Dixon, who seems to have been one of the few captured Mossi sold to the West, reports: "Mose is west of Gurma, east of Andemtenga, where a different language is spoken. Mose is also two days journey from Butmera, where the same language is spoken; four days from Bulega [Bolga tanga], the language still the same, and confederate with Kambonse, i.e. Asante; two days from Yaongo, with still the same language; six days from Bosanse which is at enmity with Mose and where people bore their lips, and often tie them together with grass, and whose language is different from Mose; four days from Busma also a different language, and in which country there is a very high mountain (Tanga) from which those who ascend never come back again [probably a reference to Plimpikou, the Mossi holy mountain]; three or four weeks from Kambonse, i.e. Asante. Kupeala is four days from Wardyga [Ouagadougou] the Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sent presents; and one month from Salak [Salaga], an Asante town, where they bring kola nuts." [131] [101] [197] [484]
9. Marc, p. 30.
10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers xlvi, 1882.
11. The people of Nobere, Manga, and other districts surrounding Bere have traditions about Krause, who is remembered as the first white-skinned person ever seen in those parts. The color of his skin was attributed to the fact that, "like the fish," he had come out of the sea. [826]
12. Krause, pp. 92 ff. Although there is no evidence to this effect in the literature, it appears certain that Mossi government officials knew of Krause's visit. They treated most travelers in the following manner: "After entering a town the party is given in charge of a man usually termed 'housemaster.' It is his duty to exercise surveillance over the action of the stranger and to report the result to the authorities. . . . The trader conducts his business through his 'housemaster,' who usually makes a handsome gain by acting as middleman (G. E. Ferguson, quoted in Wolfson, p. 199). [574]

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

CHAPTER 9

Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

BY ELLIOTT P. SKINNER

The Mossi represent the dominant population of the Voltaic Republic, numbering about 1,600,000 out of some 3,200,000 inhabitants. They represent the unique example of a group which has preserved its ethnic identity and political autonomy through all the vicissitudes of Sudanic history until it was conquered by the French in 1896. Tradition records that the people who became the Mossi left the Dagomba region in present-day Ghana during the eleventh century and moved into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still extant kingdoms are rulers *(Moro Nabas)* who formerly held feudal-like control over the provinces, districts and villages which comprise their domains. The villages, with their patri-local, polygynous, extended family households, formed the basic Mossi settlement pattern. A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus carried the power of the Mossi rulers into the smallest villages, and funneled taxes and tribute back to them. This structure still exists, but of course it has been modified by the French.

The Mossi were and are still divided into stratified royal, noble and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is a process by which royal sub-lineages descend serially until they merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there once were large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossicized.

The topography of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic grasslands. It is an immense plain, some 1,500 feet above sea level and broken only by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills. The annual total rainfall is between 30 and 40 inches, and falls almost entirely as heavy showers or thundershowers during the period from June to September. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for successful crop cultivation that any variation in the cycle results in low crop yields and a difficult "hungry period" the following year before the new crops are harvested. The Mossi do not practice irrigation, and would have trouble doing so because the three Volta Rivers which drain their territory serve as drainage chiefly during the rainy season. Only the Black Volta has water all year round; the

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

long been famous. The former are sometimes ridden but are used primarily as beasts of burden. Horses were and are still important for military and ceremonial purposes and for external trade to other areas.

The Mossi have never excelled in metalworking. The people in the northern part of the country have worked indigenous ores since aboriginal times. Those in the south get iron mainly from traders and caravans. The other metals which the Mossi smiths manufacture into tools and ornaments are also obtained from traders.

TRADE IN HISTORICAL TIMES

The geographic position of Mossi country has much to do with its being an important trade and market center. The country itself has always produced grain, cotton and livestock for export. And for several centuries caravans have passed through this region carrying Sudanese and Saharan products to the forest zones to the south, and carrying forest products back to the arid north. The beginning of this trade is lost in the dim past, but it safe to say that it developed shortly after or along with the founding of Timbuktu about 1100 A.D. The Mossi themselves were not definitely linked to this important *entrepot* until they raided it in 1328, but we can assume that they had been trading there for some time before that event took place. Similarly, we have no record of when the Mossi began trading with the forest zones, but we can also assume that this trade began around the same period or even before.

Our first evidence of Mossi trade and commerce comes from Europeans who were themselves interested in conducting their own trading activities with the peoples in the Bend of the Niger. Bowditch, an Englishman who had journeyed to Ashanti to sign a treaty facilitating the reopening of a profitable trade with the coast, wangled the first important piece of information about the Mossi from his reluctant hosts:

> Five journies from Yngwa is Mosee, a more warlike but less visited kingdom: it consists of many states, but the superior monarch is named Billa, and the capital Kookoopella. I place it to the N.W. because its merchants pass by Yngwa; they do not cross the Karhalla [White Volta] nor any river which is not fordable. (Bowditch 1819 : 180)

This information is not strictly correct since Koupela was not the capital of any of the Mossi kingdoms, but Bowditch's informant had probably heard of Koupela because it was the largest political entity near the large caravan center at Pouitenga.